



Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization

THE GENOCIDE OF THE ARMENIANS

Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc.
Brookline, Massachusetts



Acknowledgment of photographs and other images accompany the images throughout the book. Acknowledgment of the many documents and other quotations included in this book may be found at the end of each reading. Every effort has been made to trace and acknowledge owners of copyrighted materials, but in some cases that has proved impossible. Facing History and Ourselves would be pleased to add, correct, or revise such citations in future printings.

Cover Painting by Arshile Gorky, *The Artist and His Mother*, ca. 1926-1936,
courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Jacket and book design by Sandy Smith-Garcés

Copyright © 2004 by Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, Inc.

All rights reserved.

Facing History and Ourselves® is a trademark registered in the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office.

Facing History and Ourselves, 16 Hurd Road, Brookline, MA 02445

(617) 232-1595

www.facinghistory.org

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-9754125-0-7

This book is dedicated to

Dr. Charles K. and Beverly J. Achki.

Among those who have known them, they have set a compelling example
of human decency and respect for others that embodies the principles taught
in Facing History and Ourselves.

Given in their honor by

Tom Blumenthal and Lisa Achki Blumenthal

and their children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 ↪	IDENTITY AND HISTORY	1
READING 1	<i>What's in a Name?</i>	3
READING 2	<i>Multiple Identities</i>	6
READING 3	<i>Am I Armenian?</i>	10
READING 4	<i>Generations</i>	14
Chapter 2 ↪	WE AND THEY	21
READING 1	<i>The Ottoman Armenians</i>	25
READING 2	<i>Iron Ladles for Liberty Stew</i>	28
READING 3	<i>Organizing for Change</i>	31
READING 4	<i>Humanity on Trial</i>	35
READING 5	<i>The Sultan Responds</i>	39
READING 6	<i>Seeking Civil Rights</i>	42
READING 7	<i>Humanitarian Intervention</i>	45
READING 8	<i>Showdown at Bank Ottoman</i>	48
READING 9	<i>The Rise of the Young Turks</i>	51
Chapter 3 ↪	THE YOUNG TURKS IN POWER	55
READING 1	<i>Bloody News From Adana</i>	57
READING 2	<i>Ideology</i>	61
READING 3	<i>Ideology in Action</i>	65
READING 4	<i>Neighbor Turns Against Neighbor</i>	68
READING 5	<i>Planning Mass Murder</i>	72
READING 6	<i>Dictating Religion</i>	76
Chapter 4 ↪	GENOCIDE	81
READING 1	<i>Evacuation, Deportation, and Death</i>	83
READING 2	<i>Under the Cover of War</i>	87
READING 3	<i>The Round Ups Begin</i>	92

READING 4	<i>The German Connection</i>	94
READING 5	<i>Following Orders</i>	98
READING 6	<i>Women and the Deportations</i>	101
READING 7	<i>Cries Ringing in My Ears</i>	104
READING 8	<i>Targeting the Greeks and the Assyrians</i>	107
Chapter 5	↳ THE RANGE OF CHOICES	113
READING 1	<i>Remembering Rescue</i>	115
READING 2	<i>Trying to Make a Difference</i>	118
READING 3	<i>Official Policy</i>	121
READING 4	<i>Taking a Stand</i>	124
READING 5	<i>The American Ambassador in Constantinople</i>	127
READING 6	<i>Talaat and the Limits of Diplomacy</i>	131
READING 7	<i>The Eyes of the World</i>	134
READING 8	<i>Saving the Armenians</i>	137
READING 9	<i>Armenian Relief</i>	139
READING 10	<i>The Story of Aurora Mardiganian and “Ravished Armenia”</i>	142
Chapter 6	↳ WHO REMEMBERS THE ARMENIANS?	147
READING 1	<i>A Mandate for Armenia?</i>	149
READING 2	<i>Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization</i>	155
READING 3	<i>War, Genocide, and Human Rights</i>	159
READING 4	<i>The Armenian Republic and the New Turkey</i>	162
READING 5	<i>Acquitting the Assassin</i>	165
READING 6	<i>Rewriting History</i>	167
READING 7	<i>The Legacy of a Witness</i>	170
READING 8	<i>Remembrance and Denial</i>	174
READING 9	<i>Denial, Free Speech, and Hate Speech</i>	177
READING 10	<i>Demanding Justice</i>	180
READING 11	<i>Meeting the Past</i>	182
READING 12	<i>The Crime of Genocide</i>	184
INDEX		191

ABOUT FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Facing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote a more humane and informed citizenry. As the name Facing History and Ourselves implies, the organization helps teachers and their students make the essential connections between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives by examining the development and lessons of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide. It is a study that helps young people think critically about their own behavior and the effect that their actions have on their community, nation, and the world. It is based on the belief that no classroom should exist in isolation. Facing History programs and materials involve the entire community: students, parents, teachers, civic leaders, and other citizens.

Founded in 1976 in Brookline, Massachusetts, Facing History has evolved from an innovative course taught in local middle schools to an international organization that serves communities throughout the United States and abroad. Through the work of over 100 staff members at the headquarters in Greater Boston and regional offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Memphis, New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Switzerland, more than 19,000 educators around the world have participated in a Facing History workshop or institute. Each year, those teachers reach an estimated 1.5 million middle and high school students. Facing History is also constantly expanding its reach through technology, and bringing important lessons about the dangers of prejudice and the power of civic participation to more and more educators and students globally.

INTRODUCTION

In 1939, just before the invasion of Poland, Adolf Hitler told his generals:

The aim of war is not to reach definite lines but to annihilate the enemy physically. It is by this means that we shall obtain the vital living space that we need. Who today still speaks of the massacre of the Armenians?^I

He was referring to the systematic murder of the Armenians by Turkish leaders of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. In May 1915, in the midst of the war, Britain, Russia, and France warned that those leaders would be held accountable for “crimes against humanity and civilization” if the massacres continued. The Turks ignored the warning. In July, Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, begged the State Department to take action against what he called the “race murder” of the Armenians. Instead, the nation chose to remain neutral.

Henry Sturmer, a journalist for the German newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung*, was also outraged by the murders. He wanted Germany to use its influence as an ally of the Ottoman Empire to stop the systematic extermination of the Armenians. When they failed to do so, he wrote:

The mixture of cowardice, lack of conscience, and lack of foresight of which our government has been guilty in Armenian affairs is quite enough to undermine completely the political loyalty of any thinking man who has any regard for humanity and civilization.^{II}

Hitler learned a lesson from the world’s response to the mass murder of the Armenians. So did many Jews. Michel Mazar, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, recalled: “During the terrible days of July and August 1942, we often spoke of the fate of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915.” He wondered if “the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz and Treblinka” would have come into being if “at the end of the First World War, a ‘Nuremberg Tribunal’ had convened at Istanbul.”

When Raphael Lemkin, a young Polish Jew, learned about the massacre of the Armenians, he asked a law professor why no one had indicted the perpetrators for murder. The professor explained that there was no law under which they could be tried. In 1944, Lemkin coined the word *genocide* to describe the mass murder of a people and wrote a law that would make genocide a crime without borders. After World War II and the founding of the United Nations, it became part of international law.

The story of the Armenian Genocide and its legacies is told in Facing History’s newest resource book, *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians*. It is a history that is as relevant today as it was in the 1940s. It raises important questions about our own responsibilities as individuals

and as members of groups and nations to those beyond our borders.

These questions have long been central to the work of Facing History and Ourselves. Soon after the founding of the organization in 1976, Manoog Young of the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research approached us with the idea of creating a study guide on the Armenian Genocide as a companion to *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. He and others in the Armenian community were eager to tell the story of what was then a “forgotten genocide.” The booklet marked the beginning of our work with the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Our long association with Richard Hovannisian, professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles and now a member of the Facing History and Ourselves Board of Scholars, heightened our awareness of the genocide and its legacies. At our workshops and institutes, he describes how the failure to bring the perpetrators to justice and Turkey’s evolving denials of the massacre have complicated our understanding of not only genocide but also guilt and responsibility.

We could not have produced *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians* without the support of Richard Hovannisian. We are deeply appreciative of his friendship, aid, and assistance. We are also grateful to Carol Mugar for the grant to this project that funded our research, and to scholars Peter Balakian and Henry Theriault for their guidance and advice in creating this valuable resource. Special thanks to Thomas and Lisa Blumenthal, whose generous grant supports the printing of the book and its dissemination to educators. Facing History and Ourselves would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Senior Program Associate Mary Johnson in creating the first drafts of the book; Adam Strom who researched, wrote, and edited the final manuscript; Marc Skvirsky and Margot Stern Strom for their leadership; Sandy Smith-Garcés who designed the book; Chris Stokes and Cynthia Platt for helping to turn this manuscript into a book, as well as Karen Lempert, Sarah Gray, Melinda Jones-Rhoades, and Tracy O’Brien for their work in the library overseeing permissions requests.

NOTES

- I. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 23.
- II. Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Holocaust: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), pp. 39–40.